Moods, Songs and Doggerels

by

John Galsworthy

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JUSTICE

THE PIGEON

MOODS, SONGS, AND DOGGERELS

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1913

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TO
MY WIFE

THE Author's thanks are due to the Editors of *Scribner's Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *English Review*, *Nation*, *Outlook*, and *Daily Mail* for permission to reprint some of these verses.

March 1912.

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MOODS

A Dream

I dreamed. Now God appeared to me,
And beckoned. Forth, in night, we went
To where a tall and lonely tree
With ropes of yew-dark bough was bent.
And, crowned by fiery sky of stars,
God said: "O man! confess thy faith!
The word thou speakest saves or bars,
For here are gallows of thy death!"

Then, staring at that gallows yew,
And all the starry witness, I
With ague shuddered. Well I knew
That I must speak, and tell no lie;
For if in cowardice I fled
The clean confession of my hope,
God would not spare, but hang me dead
Within that twine of yew-dark rope.

Yet even while I strove to find
Breath for my words, to make them live,
There stabbed such pity thro' my mind
That I my happy life must give—
Give up my little day, my all,
With this my unrepentant breath,
And watch my choking body fall
Condemned by my own words to death.

For surely what I had to tell,
The doubting story of my trust,
Denying faith in Heaven or Hell,
Would make me very gallows-dust
To this dark God stark standing there,
So like a tall black shadow flung
Up high on misty midnight air
By lighted lanthorn lowly swung.

And all my days of past delight,
As to a drowning man came by—
And all the litanies of night—
And prayed, and spoke me tenderly.
And all the perfume and the grace,
The stealing beauty of this earth,
Put out its fingers to my face,
And softly murmured me its worth.

I saw my love with tender eyes,
And unbound hair, and girdle free;
I watched her darken with surprise,
And cry: "Dost thou abandon me?"
And what could I but answer then:
"My flower, my pearl, my summer sky,
When God requires their faith of men,
What can they do, save speak and die?"

I marked the pageantry of noon
Once more with gold and music pass;
I saw the silvery cold moon
Spill her last glamour on the grass;
I hung once more above that stream,
Whose twining waters draw me down
And down from gazing, till I seem
Myself to be that water brown.

I felt the last sweet wind creep up
To tell his tale from tree to tree,
And steal his scent from honey-cup
And shake the fragrance over me.
I heard once more the cuckoo's call—
And ah! the misery of pain,
To know that once was once for all,
And I'd not hear my bird again.

I heard a last proud battle-cry,
And felt my pulses leap once more,
And saw bright lances pierce the sky
And all the wizardry of war.
I felt once more the wings of sleep
Soft closing round my drowsy head,
And pressed my languid being deep
Within the snowdrift of my bed.

Then, as I choked, and manned my soul
For death, two stars came flying low,
As might some disembodied owl,
Circling unsighted, but for glow
Of its twin yellow eyes; then all
The owlish stars came clustering near;
And from its horrid grandeur tall
That gallows-yew bent down to hear.

And faint I spoke: "I know my faith
But shadows that required of men.
Yet, O thou God! if only wraith
Of creed I hold, 'tis all I can.
For well I know that he is base
Who hides in grey hypocrisy,
And glib pretends, to save his face,
And says 'I see,' who does not see.

"This then, O God! is all my creed:
In the beginning there was still
What there is now, no less, no more;
And at the end of all there will
Be just as much. There is no score
Of final judgment. Wonder's tale
Will never, never all be told.
There will be none without the pale,
No saint elect within the fold.

"If then this mighty magic world
Has always been, will ever be,
There must be laws within it curled
That spin it thro' eternity.
I see two equal laws obey
One sovran, never-captured Law—
For all this world would melt away
If Heart of Mystery we saw.

"And first of these twin equal laws
Is that dynamic force which flows
In life—of every birth the cause—
Replumes the tree, and swells the rose;
Inflames and clouds the violet Spring,
Inhabits all the mighty flood,
The breezes' lightest whispering,
The every impulse of our blood.

"That spirit force which cannot tire
Of franchisement, and keeps no troth;
Nor ever rests from building spire
And painting colours on the moth.
A quenchless flame that licks all air,
And lights and drives the wandering star,
That dyes with gold the maiden's hair,
And rives with frost the granite spar.

"The second equal law is this:
Implicit deep in all increase
And stir of living things, there is
A nothingness, a fate of peace,
A night, a death, an ebbing down,
A fading out of life. The bush,
That burgeons, dons a funeral gown;
And every tune contains its hush.

"All forms upswelling have within
Their hearts a static decadence;
In utter stillness does the thin
Reverberation lose its sense;
To ash the spark of spirit dies,
Each revolution of each sphere,
Each swoop of every bird that flies
To its own stilly death draws near.

"And there's between these laws the leap,
And drive, and stir of endless war;
The sway from rage of lust to sleep,
And all the cosmic whims that mar
Perfection. From this Strife is born
All variance of shape and flight—
As clouds of mountain sunset torn
From slumber-grey by flare of light.

"Yet these two laws, so fixed apart
As day and night, are brought to fold
Within that one and Sovran Heart
Whose secret never shall be told,
Yet shall thro' time, and thro' all space
With mystery pervade the world,
And make it holier than face
Of dawn that sun and mist have pearled.

"That Sovran Heart is Harmony!
Its eyes unseen, its ways unknown.
'Tis utter Justice; boundless Sea
Of Unity; and Secret Throne
Of Love; a spirit Meeting Place
Of vital dust and mortal breath,
That needs no point of time or space
To bind together Life and Death.

"'Tis thus, O God! I see the Vast—
Self-fashioned, and Self-wonderful—
A jewel infinite, so fast
With secret light, can never dull;
It is all Space, so cannot fall,
It is all Motion, may not move,
It is of Time the very all,
And has within itself all Love.

"And that brief gathering of dust
And breath—myself—doth bear this All
Resemblance, both of outer crust
And inner fire, perpetual.
I too, a battlefield of laws,
Am rhymed with Harmony Divine—
That knows, alone, the utter cause
Of me; and can the end define.

"Yea, I am nothing but a gleam
Of mystery—a tiny pearl
Of sunlit water, but a dream
Immune from waking. Through the whirl
Of ages I shall never earn
Reality; and if I might,
I would not. Wherefore should I yearn
To lift the veil, and strip delight?

"Though rush and stab of pain bemuse;
And snakes of evil coil me round
With slimy torment; dark with hues
Ironic, Grief and Pity hound
Me to rebel with aching heart—
Rebel, rebel until I die!
Yet in my secret soul apart
The whole is rhymèd—that know I.

"If through our night stalk comrades Pain
And Wrong, 'tis but the dipping half
Of equipoise. This life again
I shall not live, and I would have
My living soul in flower with love
Of Harmony—that so my death
Shall be no fall, and no remove,
But reconcilement's very breath."

I ceased. Then that dark, tall-up Thing
Of Terror, that great shadow flung
On curtained Night, black-menacing,
Stretched hand to where the gallows hung.
And all the owlish stars abased
Their staring; and the yew-ropes twined
To catch me, where I desperate faced
Him—all my eager life resigned.

Yet, in that bravery of soul
Which flames in icy clutching death,
I bade my parching tongue outroll
The last defiance of my breath:
"Thou art not Him I know! Thou hast
No part in all my vision. Thou
Art Dissonance and Hatred. Fast
Is my God throned. No God art Thou!"

Then all the firmament gave groan
Of death. And lo! *That* was not there!
The curious stars had winged, and gone
To their far glitter; all the air
Was crystal. Swift, the gallows yew,
Unbinding all her branches, meshed
My face with shade; and sudden dew
With frost my nightmared soul refreshed.

And there around me dark had flowered
With day; and summer moths as bright
As amethysts uprose, and towered,
To gem with colour all the night.
The blossoms smelled like noon, and shone
In crimson patines on the dark.
And—wonder! Carolling alone
In sky of night, I heard a lark.

A silent music—grass and leaf,
And stream, and whispered morning—blew
Around me; and a burning sheaf
Of Sun, in darkness, glistened thro'.
The breathless wind, of fire and frost,
Flew to the leaves, yet stirred not one.
And round me all the happy host
Of life was flying, yet had flown.

No more were life and death apart,
No more the winter longed for June.
And oh! the marriage in my heart
Of sun and shadow, hush and tune!
It still was night, and yet was day!
O magic dream of God revealed,
Of waking sleep, and golden-grey—
O Utter Mystery unsealed!

Courage

Courage is but a word, and yet, of words,
The only sentinel of permanence;
The ruddy watch-fire of cold winter days,
We steal its comfort, lift our weary swords,
And on. For faith—without it—has no sense;
And love to wind of doubt and tremor sways;
And life for ever quaking marsh must tread.

Laws give it not, before it prayer will blush,
Hope has it not, nor pride of being true.
'Tis the mysterious soul which never yields,
But hales us on and on to breast the rush
Of all the fortunes we shall happen through.
And when Death calls across his shadowy fields—
Dying, it answers: "Here! I am not dead!"

Love

O Love!—that love which comes so stealthily,
And takes us up, and twists us as it will—
What fever'd hours of agony you bring!
How oft we wake and cry: "God set me free
Of love—to never love again!" And still
We fall, and clutch you by the knees, and cling
And press our lips—and so, once more are glad!

And if you go, or if you never come,
Through what a grieving wilderness of pain
We travel on! In prisons stripped of light
We blindly grope, and wander without home.
The friendless winds that sweep across the plain—
The beggars meeting us at silent night—
Than we, are not more desolate and sad!

Errantry

Come! Let us lay a crazy lance in rest,
And tilt at windmills under a wild sky!
For who would live so petty and unblest
That dare not tilt at something ere he die,
Rather than, screened by safe majority,
Preserve his little life to little ends,
And never raise a rebel battle-cry!

Ah! for the weapon wistful and sublime,
Whose lifted point recks naught of woe or
weal,
Since Fate demands it shivered every time!
When in the wildness of our charge we reel
Men laugh indeed—the sweeter heavens smile,
For all the world of fat prosperity
Has not the value of that broken steel!

Ah! for the summons of a challenge cry
That sets to swinging fast the bell which tolls
A high and leaping chime of sympathy
Within that true cathedral of our souls
Set in our bodies' jeering market-place—
So, crystal-clear, the shepherd's wayward pipe
From feasts his cynical soft sheep cajoles.

God save the pennon, ragged to the dawn,
That signs to moon to stand, and sun to fly;
And flutters when the weak is overborne
To stem the tide of fate and certainty.
That knows not reason, and that seeks no
fame—
But has engraved around its stubborn wood
The words: "Knight-Errant, till Eternity!"

So! Undismayed beneath the serried clouds,
Raise up the banner of forlorn defence—
A jest to the complacency of crowds—
Bright-haloed with the one diviner sense:
To hold itself as nothing to itself;
And in the quest of its imagined star
To lose all thought of after-recompense!

Time

Beneath this vast serene of sky
Where worlds are but as mica dust,
From age to age the wind goes by;
Unnumbered summer burns the grass.
On lion rocks, at rest from strife
The æons are but lichen rust.
Then what is man's so brittle life?—
The buzzing of the flies that pass!

Acceptation

Blue sky, grey stones, and the far sea,
The lark's song trilling over me;
Grey stones, blue sky, and the green weed—
You have no sense that I can read;
Nor on the wind's breath passing by
Comes any meaning melody!
Blue sky, grey stones, and the far sea,
Lark's song, green weed, wind melody—
You are! And I'll contented be!

The Seeds of Light

Once of a mazy afternoon, beside that southern
sea,
I watched a shoal of sunny beams come swim-
ming close to me.
Each was a whited candle-flame a-flickering in
air;
Each was a silver daffodil astonied to be
there;
Each was a diving summer star, its brightness
come to lave;
And each a little naked spirit leaping on the
wave.

And while I sat, and while I dreamed, beside
that summer sea,
There came the fairest thought of all that
ever came to me:
The tiny lives of tiny men, no more they
seemed to mean
Than one of those sweet seeds of light sown
on that water green;
No more they seemed, no less they seemed,
than shimmerings of sky—
The little sunny smiles of God that glisten
forth and die.

I Ask

My happy lime is gold with flowers;
From noon to noon the breezes blow
Their love pipes; and the wild bees beat
The drums of all these summer hours . . .
Yet stifling in the valley heat
A woman's dying there below!

Between the blowing rose so red
And honey-saffroned lily cup,
Receiving Heaven, so I lie! . . .
But down the field a calf lies dead;
At this same burning summer sky
Its velvet darkened eye looks up.

. . . . . .

Behind the fairest masks of life
Dwells ever that pale constant death.
What, then, Philosophers, to say?
Must we keep wistful death to wife?
Or hide her image quite away,
And, wanton, draw forgetful breath?

Highland Spring

There's mating madness in the air,
Passionate, grave. The blossoms burst;
The burns run quick to lips athirst;
And solemn gaze the maids heart-free.

The white clouds race, the sun rays flare
And glamour—gold on pallid mist;
With greedy mouth the Spring has kissed
The wind that links the sky with sea.

The blue and lonely mountains stare,
And, longing, draw the blue above.
The hour is come! O Flower of Love—
I can no longer keep from thee!

Library

The Downs

Oh! the Downs high to the cool sky;
And the feel of the sun-warmed moss;
And each cardoon, like a full moon,
Fairy-spun of the thistle floss;
And the beech grove, and a wood-dove,
And the trail where the shepherds pass;
And the lark's song, and the wind-song,
And the scent of the parching grass!

Old Year

To-night Old Year must die,
And join the vagabonding shades of time,
And haunt, and sob, and sigh
Around the tower where soon New Year will
chime.

How fast the slim feet move!
The fiddles whine, the reedy oboes flute;
Lips whisper, eyes look love—
And Old Year's dying, dying underfoot!

So mute, and spent, so wan—
Poor corse!—beneath the laughter flying by;
The revel dances on
And treads you to the dust—condemned to
die!

Among the flowers that soon
Will cling and breathe above your pallid death,
On with the rigadoon!
Dance, dance! Be uttered never a mourning breath! . . .

The moonlight floods the grass,
The music's hushed, and all the festal din;
The pale musicians pass,
Each clasping close his green-cased violin.

Old Year! not breathing now,
Along the polished floor you lie alone;
I bend, and touch your brow—
My dead Year, that has slipped away and gone!

The Moon at Dawn

When, every dawn, the homeless breeze
Creeps back to wake the sleeping trees,
The moon steals down and no one sees!

Yes! every morn, no watcher there,
She turns that face, once angel fair,
And smiles, as only harlots dare!

. . . . . .

I saw her once, the insatiate moon,
Go stealing, coiffed with orange hood,
From Night, her lover, still in swoon—
All wanton she, who chaste was wooed!

Serenity

The smiling sea
And land do dream, and sky;
The very bee
Doth dream as he goes by.

In dreamy fields
Of blue, moon's scimitar
Doth dream it shields
One dreaming timid star.

The barques drift slow,
And, dreaming, melt away
Where golden glow
Consoles the death of day;

And land is stark
With that far row of trees
Like puff-balls, dark,
And eerie, down the breeze.

The dreaming flowers,
The dreaming lovers nod.
Serene these hours—
Serenity is God!

Nightmare

There fell a man in the heat,
Out of the race he ran,
Who knew too well he was not beat—
O God! Was *I* that man?

On a Soldier's Funeral

No pipes have skirled;
But Heaven's wildest music blares!
Above the compound lightning flares,
The rain is whirled.

No drums shall roll—
'Tis but a private soldier gone!
The cold light paints no funeral stone—
No bell need toll!

He lived his tame
And little day of silent tasks
And silent duty—no one asks
To know his name.

The milestones fade
Along the road that he has come.
No cheer of music takes him home—
His wage is paid.

The wind shrills high,
The rapid day is chasing grief
With lash of blinding rain—and brief
The footfalls die.

Let

My love lived there! And now
'Tis but a shell of brick,
New-painted, flowered about—
So far from being quick
As night, when stars die out.

From windows gaily wide,
Where once the curtained dark
My Heaven used to hide,
The memories wan and stark
Troop down to me outside.

Rhyme of the Land and Sea

By the side of me—the immortal Pan—
Lies the sweetest thing of the sea;
In her gown of brine,
With her breast to mine,
And her drowned dark hair lies she!

And her eyes that have looked on the fathomy
weed,
So mournful are fixed on me:
"I am thy slave, O Master, O Pan!
And never shall more be free!"

But her smile—like the wine-red, shadowy
sea,
When the day slides past and down—
By the gods, it is tender death to me!
In its waters dark I drown!
"O slave of mine! Thou mystery
Of smiling depths—I drown!"

Slum Cry

Of a night without stars—wind withdrawn,
God's face hidden, indignity near me,
Drink and the paraffin flares to sear me—
Dust-coloured hunger—so was I born!

Of a city noonday—sand through sieve
Sifting down, dusk padding the glamour—
I of the desolate, white-lipped clamour
Millioning fester—so do I live!

Of a poor-house morning—not asking why,
Breath choked, dry-eyed—death of me staring;
Faces of strangers, and no one caring—
God! who hath made me!—so shall I die!

Autumn by the Sea

We'll hear the uncompanioned murmur of
the swell,
And touch the drift-wood, delicately grey,
And with our quickened senses smell
The sea-flowers all the day!

We'll count the white gulls pasturing on
meadows brown,
And gaze into the arches of the blue,
Till evening's ice comes stealing down
From those far fields of dew.

Now slow the crimson Sun-god swathes his
eye, and sails
To sleep in his innumerable cloak;
And gentle heat's gold pathway fails
In autumn's opal smoke!

Then long we'll watch the journey of the
soft half-moon—
A gold-bright moth slow-spinning up the
sky,
And know the dark flight—all too soon—
Of land-birds passing by.

Through all the black wide night of stars
our souls shall touch
The sky, in God's own quietude of things,
And gain brief freedom from this clutch
Of Life's encompassings.

Magpie

O Magpie, lonely flying—
What do you bring to me?
Two for joy, and one for sorrow!
Loved to-day, is lost to-morrow!
O Magpie, flying, flying—
What have you brought to me?

Question

Where do we go, brothers, when we are
done—
Where drift, free of dull clay?
Hover—dancing beams of the sun,
Sheen of moon on the night woods fey?

Are we a cry, brothers, wind in the trees—
Bough songs, whispering by?
Wild-grass music under the breeze?
River's chuckle and reedy sigh?

Shall we be flower cups, golden and white,
Field stars—lighted each noon?
Dew-grey cobwebs, spun in the night—
We grand travellers, gone so soon?

Are we the desolate moods of the sea,
Vague rhyme, lap of green waves?
Grey bird's call; the hum of the bee;
Bat's shrill gibber in eerie caves?

Light on the fern—shadows spilled from the
leaves;
Bud-gold, dyed in spring dawn;
Ivied satin under the eaves;
Wind-blown silver of summer corn?

Are we the griefs buried deep in dear hearts—
Sore left—mourning us gone?
Watching yew-tree's shadowy darts;
Rain-drops, sad, on the funeral stone?

Shall we flit comforting over the earth—
Brave thoughts, ghosts of kind days;
Soft console each quavering birth;
Death's old whispering footsteps praise?

. . . . . .

Where is the home for us? Let it be told,
Thou dark God, and I cease!
Not till wings of Mystery fold
May my question rest in peace!

Silver Point

Sharp against a sky of grey
Pigeon's nest in naked tree;
All the silver twigs up-curled,
All the leafy spirits furled;
Not a breath to fan the day!

World aspiring and severe,
Not a hum of fly or bee,
Not a song, and not a cry,
Not a perfume stealing by;
Stillest moment of the year!

Deflowered

Here I come, to my trade!—
  Look back at me, sad men!—
What I am now, you made—
  A ghost, a painted murrain.

Here I stand, in the dark!—
  Look back at me, sad men!—
The gay hours that I mark
  Will never strike again.

Here I droop, in the night!—
  Look back at me, sad men!—
The dark flower of delight
  Bedrabbled down with rain.

The Soul

My soul's the sky—my flying soul!
The lightnings flare, the thunders roll,
The sun and moon and stars go by,
And great winds sweep my soul, the sky!

My brooding soul—my soul's the sea!
The snaky weed, and whishing scree,
The white waves' surge from pole to pole,
And still green depths—the sea's my soul!

My soul's the Spring—my loving soul!
Will dance, and leap, and drain the bowl
Of love; and, longing, twine and cling
To all the world—my soul's the Spring!

My fevered soul! My soul's the Town!
Thro' flaring street goes up and down;
The bells of feast and traffic toll
And maze their music in my soul.

My tranquil soul! My soul too wide
For Sky, or Spring, or Town, or Tide!
Thou traveller to outer strand
Of Home Serene—my soul so grand!

Autumn

When every leaf has different hue,
And flames of birch tree blow;
And high against November blue
The white cloud's bent in bow;

When buzzard hawk wheels in the Sun,
And harsh daws crown the cleave,
And autumn paints the heather dun,
And white buds make believe;

When droning thresher hums its song
And tale of harvest proves,
And rusty steers the lane-ways throng,
And grey birds flit in droves;

Then bird, and beast, and every tree,
And those few flowers that blow,
Do seem such treasure-loves to me
Who would no winter know!

Street Lamps

Lamps, lamps! Lamps ev'rywhere!
You wistful, gay, and burning eyes,
You stars low-driven from the skies
Down on the rainy air.

You merchant eyes, that never tire
Of spying out our little ways;
Of summing up our little days
In ledgerings of fire—

Inscrutable your nightly glance,
Your lighting and your snuffing out,
Your flicker through the windy rout,
Guiding this mazy dance.

O watchful, troubled gaze of gold,
Protecting us upon our beats—
You piteous glamour of the streets,
Youthless, and never old!

Persia—Moritura

Home of the free! Protector of the weak!
Shall We and this Great Grey Ally make sand
Of all a nation's budding green, and wreak
Our winter will on that unhappy land?
Is all our steel of soul dissolved and flown?
Have fumes of fear encased our heart of flame?
Are we with panic so deep-rotted down
In self, that we can feel no longer shame
To league, and steal a nation's hope of youth?
Oh! Sirs! Is our Star merely cynical?
Is God reduced? That we must darken truth,
And break our honour with this creeping fall?

Is Freedom but a word—a flaring boast?
Is Self-concern horizon's utter sum?
If so—To-day let England die, and ghost
Through all her godless history to come!
If, Sirs, the faith of men be Force alone,
Let us ring down—The farce is nothing worth!
If Life be only prayer to things of stone,
Come Death! And let us, friends, go mocking forth!
But if there's aught, in all Time's bloody hours,
Of Justice, if the herbs of Pity grow—
O Native Land, let not those only flowers
Of God be desert-strewn and withered now!

Gaulzery Moor

Moor of my fathers—the road leads high—
I, a slow-foot traveller, pass,
Gorse and heather, heather and grass,
Up to the curve of the autumn sky.
Purple are all the darkening tors
That crown the swift-retreating day;
The far-blown wood-smoke steals its way
From stars of fire in the cottage doors;
And the South-West wind with her reedy tune
Sings in the pines her wild, soft praise;
There hangs a golden, mocking moon
At the Western cornerways!
Then, ah! beneath these native trees
To press my body to the earth;
To drink the life-wine of this breeze,
And—drinking—die of dearth!

The Moor Grave

I lie out here under a heather sod,
A moor-stone at my head; the moor-winds
play above.
I lie out here. . . . In graveyards of their
God
They would not bury desperate me who died
for love.
I lie out here under the sun and moon;
Across me bearded ponies stride, the cur-
lews cry.
I have no little tombstone screed, no: "Soon
To glory shall she rise!" But deathless
peace have I!

The Prayer

If on a Spring night I went by
And God were standing there,
What is the prayer that I would cry
To Him? This is the prayer:
  O Lord of Courage grave,
  O Master of this night of Spring!
  Make firm in me a heart too brave
  To ask Thee anything!

Dedication

Thine is the solitude that rare flowers know,
Whose face is slender aristocracy.
And yet, of flowers that in the garden grow,
There's none disputes thy sweet supremacy.
Thine is the oldest secret of the world:
How to be loved, and still to keep apart—
A lily blown, a bud not yet uncurled—
Gold-fortuned I, whose very breath thou art!

SONGS

Devon to Me!

Where my fathers stood
Watching the sea,
Gale-spent herring-boats
Hugging the lea;
There my mother lives,
Moorland and tree.
Sight o' the blossom!
Devon to me!

Where my fathers walked,
Driving the plough;
Whistled their hearts out—
Who whistles now?
There my mother burns
Fire faggots free.
Scent o' the wood-smoke!
Devon to me!

Where my fathers sat,
Passing their bowls;
—They've no cider now,
God rest their souls!—
There my Mother feeds
Red cattle three.
Taste o' the cream-pan!
Devon to me!

Where my fathers sleep,
Turning to dust,
This old body throw
When die I must!
There my Mother calls,
Wakeful is She!
Sound o' the West-wind!
Devon to me!

Where my fathers lie,
When I am gone,
Who need pity me
Dead? Never one!
There my Mother clasps
Me. Let me be!
Feel o' the red earth!
Devon to me!

A Mood

Love's a flower, is born and broken,
Plucked apace—and hugged apart.
Evening comes, it clings—poor token—
Dead and dry, on lover's heart.

Love's the rhyme of a summer minute
Woven close like hum of flies;
Sob of wind, and meaning in it
Dies away, as summer dies.

Love's a shimmery morning bubble
Puffed all gay from pipe of noon;
Spun aloft on breath of trouble—
Bursts in air—is gone—too soon!

Counting the Stars

The cuckoo bird has long been dumb,
And owls instead and flitting jars
Call out, call out for us to come,
My Love and me, to count the stars;
And into this wide orchard rove—
The whispering trees scarce give us room,
That drop their petals on my Love
And me beneath the apple bloom.

And each pale petal is alive
With dew of twilight from the sky,
Where all the stars hang in their hive,
That we've to count, my Love and I.
The boughs below, the boughs above,
They scatter, lest their twisted gloom
Should stay the counting of my Love
And me beneath the apple bloom.

And when the Mother Moon comes by,
And puts the little stars to bed,
We count, my timid Love and I,
The pretty apple stars instead;
Until at last all lights remove,
And dark sleep dropping on the combe,
Fastens the eyelids of my Love
And me beneath the apple bloom.

Straw in the Street

Straw in the street!
My heart, oh! hearken—
Fate thrums its song of sorrow!
The windows darken—
O God of all to-morrow!

Straw in the street!
To wintry sleeping
Turns all our summer laughter.
The brooms are sweeping—
There's naught for me hereafter!

Cuckoo Song: Dartmoor

Mayday wears a summer smile,
Mayday is a mummer,
Sleepy rills and fat green fields,
All the coat of summer.
Sturdy blackthorn twining stars,
Golden gorse a-shining,
All the tors blow honey-sweet
Honey deaths to pining!
    Cuckoo's tell-a-secret song
    Mocks the bells, mocks the bells.
    Whistle back, and win along!
    Win along, and follow!
    Cuckoo's on the restless moor,
    Church is in the hollow!

Moorland birdies hopping by,
Skylark's dew a-dropping;
Whispers from the valley stream,
Crisp the ponies cropping!
Clash your bells! Old Church have done
Of wishing you may get me!
I'll go worshipping the sun
While the sun will let me!
    Cuckoo's fetter-breaking song
    Mocks the bells, mocks the bells!
    Come, my heart! Let's go along!
    Go along, and follow!
    Cuckoo's on the living moor,
    Church is in the hollow!

Countryman's Song

Ah! trouble and trouble and sorrow!
My heart has grown cold wi' her eyes.
I'm cheated for aye o' me morrow,
And sick to be laid where she lies.
For what does it matter what's comin'?
'Tis sure to be better than this.
Oh! hollow the tune I am hummin',
An' truth that I starve for her kiss.

The taste o' the wind as it passes,
The clocks in the strikin' o' time,
The smell o' the rain in the grasses
Were she—an' 'tis all out o' rhyme.
So what does it matter what's comin'?
'Tis sure to be better than this.
Oh! hollow the tune I am hummin',
An' truth that I starve for her kiss.

She gave me a long look o' pity,
Like a little white owl from a tree,
An' dropped. . . . So this wonderful city
Has only dead ashes for me.
An' what does it matter what's comin'?
'Tis sure to be better than this.
Oh! hollow the tune I am hummin'!
An' oh! to be done wi' it—bliss!

Land Song of the West Country

The lanes are long, and home is far,
But we'll go jogging, jogging on.
The day grows dim, here comes a star,
Athwart the bank the young moon peeps,
And all the honeysuckle sleeps.
But we'll go jogging on.

The sunset's vanishing apace,
But we'll go jogging, jogging on.
The land's all like a maiden's face,
The more you look the less you see,
'Tis all a glowing mystery.
And we'll go jogging on.

The trout are rising in the stream,
We ford it, jogging, jogging on.
The mill-wheel's turning in a dream;
The chafer's booming overhead,
And every little bird's in bed.
And we go jogging on.

The cottages are praying smoke,
As we go jogging, jogging on.
The hayrick's bonneted a-poke;
The tawny kine are stretched at ease
Beneath the dusky, sleeping trees,
As we go jogging on.

There's many a drop of tender rain
As we go jogging, jogging on.
And many a while that's fine again.
There's many a dip and many a rise,
And many a smile of friendly eyes.
There's many a scent, and many a tune,
And over all the little moon,
As we go jogging on.

Past

The clocks are chiming in my heart
Their cobweb chime;
Old murmurings of days that die,
The sob of things a-drifting by.
The clocks are chiming in my heart!

The stars have twinkled, and gone out—
Fair candles blown!
The hot desires burn low, and wan
Those ashy fires, that flamed anon.
The stars have twinkled, and gone out!

Old journeys travel in my head!
They come and go—
Forgotten smiles of stranger friends,
Sweet, weary miles, and sweeter ends.
Old journeys travel in my head!

The leaves are dropping from my tree!
Dead leaves and brown.
The vine-leaf ghosts make pale my brow;
For ever frosts and winter now.
The leaves are dropping from my tree!

When Love Is Young

When Love is young, she needs no staff,
No teaching how to lure and laugh;
When Love is young, she swoons away—
So fiery sweet is Love in May!

When Love is old, she has no toys,
No burning hours, no rainbow joys;
When Love is old, she's like a dove—
Yet strong as death is winter Love!

Wind

Wind, wind—heather gipsy,
Whistling in my tree!
All the heart of me is tipsy
On the sound of thee.
Sweet with scent of clover,
Salt with breath of sea.
Wind, wind—wayman lover,
Whistling in my tree!

Rose and Yew

Love flew by! Young wedding day,
Peeping through her veil of dew,
Saw him, and her heart went fey—
His wings no shadows threw.

Love flew by! Young day was gone,
Owls were hooting—Whoo—to-whoo!
Happy-wedded lay alone,
Who'd vowed that love was true.

. . . . . .

Love flies by, and drops a rose—
Drops a rose, a sprig of yew!
Happy these—but ah! for those
Whose love has cried: Adieu!

The Cup

Here is my Cup; a fairy bell,
Where the wind's rough fluting turns
To a thin-tuned sigh of shell!
And all the breath of melody
In sob and song she brings to me.

Here is my Cup; a crystal pool
Where the milk-white moonlight burns,
And the golden sunlight's cool.
As twilight dark, like dew a-shine,
The goblet she of every wine.

Village Sleep Song

Sleep! all who toil;
The harvest wains have lumbered by.
Cool night has donned her dress of dew
And dusk; so dark's the sleepy sky
That all day long was burning blue.

Sleep! good red soil,
That gave such store of golden grain;
For sleeping lies the harvest day,
Asleep the winding leafy lane
Where none's afoot to miss his way.

Sleep! village street,
You've stared too long upon the sun,
More gentle are the eyes of night.
Sleep, windows! all your work is done,
And all too soon to-morrow's light.

Sleep! Sleep! The heat
Is slumbering. No chafers hum;
And fast asleep the harvest flowers.
The spinning jars, and owls have come
To sing to sleep the drowsy hours!

Sleep! honey hives!
And swallow's flight, and thrushes' call!
Sleep, tongues! a little, while you may,
And let God's cool oblivion fall
On all the gossip of the day.

Sleep! Men and wives,
A sweetness of refreshment steal;
The morning star can vigil keep;
Too quickly turns the slumber wheel—
And all you little children, sleep!

DOGGERELS

Drake's Spirit

When the land needs
I am coming;
I, Francis Drake,
From my roaming.
Till then, howl, dogs
Of prophecy!
I yet will drive
The unknown sea!

If my land calls
I am coming;
I, Francis Drake,
From my roaming.
So, rest my drum!
And phantom barque
Still for a while
Go sail the dark!

When Heaven wills,
I am coming;
I, Francis Drake,
From my roaming.
Then, traitors black,
Grey winds all foul,
Do ye your worst
To shake my soul!

Plymouth

Stretched at fair ease,
Clear-eyed I watch the seas,
My finger on the pulse of Time.
No nations rise
Until my captains bid them climb.
The trade of worlds I signify;
And 'neath my stones
The bones of sailors lie.

The Cliff Church

Here stand I,
Buttressed over the sea!
Time and sky
Take no toll from me.

To me, grey—
Wind-grey, flung with foam—
Ye that stray
Wild-foot, come ye home!

Mother I—
Mother I will be!
Ere ye die,
Hear! O sons at sea!

Shall I fall,
Leave my flock of graves?
Not for all
Your rebelling waves!

I stand fast—
Let the waters cry!
Here I last
To Eternity!

Promenade

All sweet and startled gravity
My Love comes walking from the Park;
Her eyes are full of what they've seen—
The little bushes puffing green,
The candles pale that light the chestnut tree.

The tulip and the jonquil spies;
The sunshine and the sudden dark;
The dance of buds; and Madam Dove;
Sir Blackbird fluting of his love—
These little loves my Love has in her eyes.

In dainty shoes and subtle hose
My Love comes walking from the Park.
She is, I swear, the sweetest thing
That ever left the heart of Spring,
To tell the secret: Whence the pollen blows!

Tittle-Tattle

Tittle-tattle! Scandal and japes,
Gibe, and gossip, and folly's rattle!
Ringed to fashion, caught like apes
In your cage of tittle-tattle!

Mean your skies,
And mean the ways you tread;
The meanness of your eyes
Is never fully fed.
You that have birth
In gold and grovellings!
You superfluity
Of miserable earth,
You trousered things
And women without souls—
Out of the sunlight
To your holes!

Tittle-tattle! Whisper and pry!
Sneers and snigger, and empty prattle!
Truth and charity into a lie
To the tune of tittle-tattle!

The Robin

As I sit hunting for the word
Each morning in my room, there comes,
As bold as day, a robin bird,
And eats up all the breakfast crumbs.

O little friend! so still as air,
As your own bobbing shadow, still;
O bright familiar, strutting there
Till you have pecked your little fill—

You are no bird, you fairy sprite
In hue of red, and hue of dust,
Who come to turn dark thoughts to light—
For what are you but living trust?

To My Dog

My dear, when I leave you
I always drop a bit of me—
A holy glove or sainted shoe—
Your wistful corse I leave it to,
For all your soul has gone to see
How I could have the stony heart
So to abandon you.

My dear, when you leave me
You drop no glove, no sainted shoe;
And yet you know that humans be
Mere blocks of dull monstrosity,
Whose spirits cannot follow you
When you're away, with all their hearts,
As yours can follow me.

My dear, since we must leave
(One sorry day) I you, you me;
I'll learn your wistful way to grieve;
Then through the ages we'll retrieve
Each other's scent and company;
And longing shall not pull my heart—
As now you pull my sleeve!

"The Birth of Venus"

The Spring wind fans her hair,
And after her fly little waves,
Her feet are shod in pearly shoen,
And down her foam-white breast doth shine
A silver moisture, and new-strewn
Petals encarnadine.

Her eyes are deaths to care,
Her eyes of love are tender caves.
The blossoms blowing on the trees—
The young Spring's soft enchanted stir—
The humming of the golden bees—
All are the voice of her!

To the Spirit of Our Times. 1899

(After Sir Walter Raleigh)

Tell Life she smells of gold,
And Simpleness is gone;
Old Honesty is cold,
And Greatness lives alone.
Tell Arts they cringe for pelf,
And Pens they flourish cant;
Tell Creeds they are but Self,
And Tongues they do but rant.

Tell Credit and Fair Names
They show too smug a face,
The bow of Honour aims
Where Honour has no place.
Young Effort's wing is down
And tries no more to soar;
Since Fair-Play wears the frown
Of hatred at our war.

Tell Charity she's mean,
Whose light is never hid;
And Mercy she's unseen
When such as women bid.
Our Virtue's name is treason,
A bond of empty sealing.
Tell Hearts they live by reason,
And Heads they faint with feeling.

Tell Smiles they have the canker
Inherent of conceit;
False Wit it is but rancour
A-sneering at defeat.
Tell Victory she's breath
That has no longer Beauty;
And Dignity of Death
Which saves him from his duty.

Tell Chivalry's complacent,
And Modesty asleep;
Prim Decency too decent,
And Caution all too deep.
Tell Journalists their teaching
It festers in the city;
And Trade of overreaching,
That has no room for pity.

Tell Comfort she's too sure;
Tell Patriots they seem.
Our Wealth is but a lure,
A brazen, petty dream.
Ah! Truth it has no core,
But plays a hollow part;
For Justice goes no more
With singleness of heart!

The Flowers

In mountain morn, at silver dawn,
From out the grey dew smother,
Flower children peep
Through cobweb sleep,
And rise from Earth, their mother.

To mountain sky—sun golden high
In his cerulean yonder—
Like starry snow,
They jewel below,
And lift their dewy wonder.

At mountain noon, to Zephyr tune,
Each in her own wild fashion,
Fey—young and old—
With scarves of gold
They weave the dance of passion.

Till lost in dream, by dying gleam—
Broidery rare and spangled—
Their perfumed skein
Is wound again,
All amethyst entangled.

And soft in night, by moony light,
Under the moth's pale hover,
Grey witchery—
Sweet, velvet, shy,
They touch the dark, their lover.

Hetaira

She gave him all her heart;
She slept beside him;
She lived her hour in dreaming of his good.
From all else kept apart
That he might pride him:
She loved him only! Surely all she could!

She braved his darkest mood
To cool his fever;
Her care was fairy tale that never ends.
And when she died? Ah! would
They praise her? Never!
You see, she was not married to him, Friends!

The Devon Sage

Zach'ry lad! Venture does et,
'Tes no gude to set an' muzz et!
'Tidn' for yu to play at homin',
All yure vathers went a-roamin';
Vish be plenty, sea be wide,
Never know, ontil yu've tried.
Soon as ever day be litten,
There's yure motto, bright and written!
Sail, no matter what the tide!

Hold on vast an' grip yure saddle,
Givin' up's all viddle vaddle!
'Ave no truck nor trade with cantin',
Gallivantin', puzzivantin'!
Take an' *du!* If one don't pay
Get yu roun' the t'other way.
Kape yure lip as stiff as leather,
Kape yure 'eart so light's a veather!
Never snivel, work or play!

Ef yu're beaten, never know et,
'Tesn' policy to show et.
Wheel spins roun', yure turn's a-comin',
Kape yure 'ead up, kape on hummin'!
Go it till yu're black an' blue,
Never cut it till yu're thru'.
Step et double ef yu valter;
Yu've a-got to break yure halter
When they comes to hangin' yu.

Trouble shakes yu, hold on vaster,
Never spell the word dizaster.
Take yure rain an' take yure sunnin',
Kape yure mouth shut when yu're runnin';
Talk's but talk, an' done 'tes done,
Braggart's not *yure* mother's son.
'Unter, varmer, vighter, rover,
Slape yure slape when all es over—
Life an' Death 'tes nowt but one!

Rhyme After Rain

Starry-eyed is April morn,
Rainbells glitter on the thorn.
Birds are tuning down the lane
Patter song of fallen rain.
Spring can grieve, but Spring can be
Very life of minstrelsy!
  Gather the sob, gather the song!
  Neither will last, neither will last!
  All is yours, but not for long,
  Life travels fast!

Rainbow's dipping out to sea,
Lambs do whisper devilry.
Leaves are sweet as e'er you've seen,
Sun is golden, grass is green,
Meadow's pied with flowers wet,
Thrushes sing: "Forget, forget!"
  Gather the grey, gather the gleam!
  Neither will last, neither will last!
  Certainty—'tis but a dream!
  Life travels fast!

Gorse has lit his lanterns all,
Cobwebbed thrift's a fairy ball,
Earth it smells as good as new,
Winds are merry, sky is blue.
Spring has laughter, Spring has tears,
Life has courage, life has fears.
Gather the tears, gather the mirth!
Neither will last, neither will last!
Old Year's death is Young Year's birth—
Life travels fast!

Life?

Life? What is Life?
The leaping up of level wave;
The flaring of an ashy fire;
The living wind in airless grave!

Death? What is Death?
The dying of immortal sun;
The sleeping of the sleepless moon;
The end of story not begun!